

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first tracing code corresponding to a source of the mail pieces;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second tracing code on said mailing statement, said second tracing code corresponding to said source of the mail pieces;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility; and

verifying that said first tracing code corresponds to said second tracing code.

2. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of verifying includes the steps of:

scanning said mailing statement to read said second tracing code; and

scanning at least a sampling of said plurality of mail pieces to read said first tracing code.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the mail pieces define certain characteristics, and wherein said first tracing

code further corresponds to the characteristics of the mail pieces is encrypted.

4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said first tracing code is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces;

providing a first tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces, said first tracing code corresponding to a source of the mail pieces;

creating a mailing statement for said plurality of mail pieces;

providing a second tracing code on said mailing statement, said second tracing code corresponding to said source of the mail pieces;

submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility; and

capturing and recording an identity of an individual submitting said plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement.

9. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of providing a first tracing code on each of said plurality of mail pieces includes the step of passing each of said plurality of mail pieces through tracing code producing equipment.

10. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the first tracing code is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or indicia.

11. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 2, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when said first tracing code does not correspond to said second tracing code.

12. (Previously presented) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of mail pieces via mail production equipment;

providing an encrypted source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces via source tracing code producing equipment;

scanning each of the plurality of mail pieces to read the encrypted source tracing code;

verifying that the encrypted source tracing code corresponds to a source of the mail pieces; and

creating a mailing statement for the plurality of mail pieces via mailing statement producing equipment, the mailing statement

including a corresponding source tracing code corresponding to the encrypted source tracing code on each of the plurality of mail pieces.

13. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

submitting the plurality of mail pieces and the mailing statement to a postal service facility;

scanning the mailing statement to read the corresponding source tracing code;

scanning at least a sampling of the plurality of mail pieces to read the encrypted source tracing code; and

verifying that the encrypted source tracing code corresponds to the corresponding source tracing code.

14. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, wherein the encrypted source tracing code is embedded into a digital image, a text, a watermark, paper fibers or invisible ink.

15. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 12, further comprising the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual submitting the plurality of mail.

16. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 12, wherein the encrypted source tracing code is independent from a meter imprint, digital postage mark or indicia.

17. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of providing an alert indication when the encrypted source tracing code does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

18. (Previously presented) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

receiving at least one mail piece at a postal service facility; capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece;

providing a source tracing code on the at least one mail piece via source tracing code producing equipment, after the at least one mail piece has been submitted to the postal facility; and

storing information produced by the source tracing code producing equipment in association with the captured and stored identity of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 18, wherein the step of capturing and storing the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual submitting the at least one mail piece via recording equipment.

22. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the recording equipment comprises camera equipment, video equipment, finger print equipment or retina scan equipment.

23. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 18, further comprising the step of using the source tracing code to trace the at least one mail piece back to the individual.

24. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 8, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

25. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 8, further comprising the steps of storing the first or second tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual, and subsequently using the first or second tracing code to trace at least one of the plurality of mail pieces back to the individual.

26. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 11, further comprising the step of tracing the first or second tracing code back to the source of the mail pieces to determine a reason why the first tracing code does not correspond to the second tracing code.

27. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 15, wherein the step of capturing and recording the identity of an individual

comprises the step of recording at least one physical characteristic of the individual.

28. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 15, further comprising the steps of storing the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code in association with the recorded identity of the individual, and subsequently using the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code to trace at least one of the plurality of mail pieces back to the individual.

29. (Previously presented) The method of Claim 17, further comprising the step of tracing the encrypted source tracing code or the corresponding source tracing code back to the source of the mail pieces to determine a reason why the encrypted source tracing code does not correspond to the corresponding source tracing code.

30. (Currently amended) A method for providing traceability of mail pieces, comprising the steps of:

providing an encrypted tracing code on at least one envelope;

providing the at least one envelope having the encrypted tracing code to a mailer to produce at least one mail piece;

recording the identity of the mailer in association with the encrypted tracing code;

receiving the at least one mail piece envelope at a postal service facility; and

reading the encrypted tracing code on the at least one mail piece envelope to verify the source of the mail piece envelope.

31. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

capturing and storing the identity of an individual submitting the at least one mail piece envelope to the postal facility in association with the encrypted tracing code; and

subsequently using the encrypted tracing code to trace the at least one mail piece envelope back to the individual.

32. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of tracing the encrypted tracing code back to the mailer when the source of the mail piece envelope cannot be verified.